



Virginia School Travel Plan Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

Q. Is VDOT accepting non-infrastructure applications for the 2011 grant cycle?

- A. For this grant cycle, VDOT will NOT be accepting non-infrastructure applications, although they are expected to be re-continued in the future. Those who are interested in SRTS related training or technical assistance, or who have any questions about this decision, are encouraged to contact the VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator.

Q. How does the decision not to award non-infrastructure grants affect my school/locality's SRTS program?

- A. Non-engineering efforts and solutions remain a part of the program and should still be included in all travel plans. Localities are encouraged to find alternate funding sources for walk to school events and other non-infrastructure activities, or to look for ways to provide them at low or no-cost.

Otherwise, those seeking infrastructure funding should note the following:

- The application must be completed by the locality (town, city or county). Schools CANNOT be the primary sponsor of an infrastructure application.
- Any school for which infrastructure funding is applied for must have a separate, and approved, School Travel Plan, unless multiple schools are located in a close proximity such that one project would benefit all.
- For each travel plan that does contain more than one school, data collection efforts and other information supplied on the School Travel Plan and application must be separated by school.

Please see the SRTS Program Guidelines at www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes for more information.

Q. Is funding available to create a School Travel Plan?

- A. As of Fall 2009, all requests for funding from the Virginia Safe Routes Program require the completion of a School Travel Plan first. Funding for additional planning is available for those who seek to create a more in-depth plan especially for the purpose of identifying proposed locations for infrastructure improvements.

Q. Is the preliminary review of a School Travel Plan required?

- A. No, but it is highly recommended. Preliminary Review by VDOT will provide you with an opportunity to revise the plan prior to submitting for approval. To receive

feedback, submit the plan on or before the preliminary review deadline to the VDOT SRTS Coordinator.

Q. What is the turnaround time for VDOT review of a School Travel Plan?

- A. An effort is made to review it within six business days. There is a deadline for preliminary review as well as a deadline for the submittal of School Travel Plans for final approval. Check the dates in the “Application Schedule” of this year’s *Safe Routes to School Program Guidelines*.

Q. How do we submit the School Travel Plan?

- A. Submission as a pdf document via email is strongly encouraged and should be directed to the VDOT Safe Routes to School Coordinator. Contact the coordinator if alternate arrangements are necessary.

Q. Does our locality have to wait to receive approval of the School Travel Plan before filling out an application?

- A. Yes, VDOT is implementing an online application system that you will not be able to access until you are given the link, upon notification of travel plan approval.

Q. Do we fill in the School Travel Plan worksheet that is provided or can we create a separate document?

- A. The worksheet can be used by copying and pasting the template available on the website into a new document. If your committee wants to create a separate document, that’s fine, just make sure your plan’s sections and information correspond to those sections in the most recent Virginia School Travel Plan Reference Guide and Worksheet.

Q. Can School Travel Plans include high schools or high school students?

- A. No. School Travel Plans and applications should only include those schools with students between kindergarten and eighth grade that are participating in the local SRTS program. In cases where 7th and 8th graders attend a secondary school with higher grades, only count the 7th and 8th grade students.

Q. What are the most common mistakes in completing School Travel Plans?

- A. Below are some items to double check before sending in a School Travel Plan for review. In any case, proposed plans should be formatted by section in accordance with the posted 2011 Virginia School Travel Plan Reference Guide and Worksheet.
- Include the name and contact information for the Contact Person for the plan in Section 2; this should be someone who works for the school, school division, or local government.
 - Summarize the public input *process* in Section 3; do not include the details of what you have learned from the public input, but rather how you have gone about gaining the public’s input. Include groups, names of stakeholders interviewed, meetings, numbers of survey returned, etc and the dates or months you have gathered the information. The input itself should be incorporated into the plans as appropriate.

- For Section 5, travel modes and distance, be sure to include an estimate for ALL students at the school(s) between kindergarten and eighth grade not just those who returned Parent Surveys or similar tallies.
- For Sections 6, 7 and 9: for physical barriers that are also part of solutions and strategies sections, be sure to give the address or closest intersection where they are located.

Q. When attaching documents to the School Travel Plan, is it sufficient to say “See attachment”?

- A. It is best to include a short summary of any attached or referenced documents in the plan; this makes it easy for the community to understand and for reviewers looking at the document.

Q. Should we include existing strategies in the Creating Solutions and Action Plan sections?

- A. The intent of the plan is to develop solutions to address the list of barriers to walking and biking to school. If an activity is ongoing, make sure to include it in the section about your current school travel environment. If you are proposing to improve or enhance an existing activity to address the list of identified barriers, include that in your solutions and action plan.

Q. How specific should we be in describing planned strategies in the Creating Solutions and Action Plan sections?

- A. Be as specific as possible and label engineering strategies' locations on a map – for example:
 Engineering Strategy #1: Complete sidewalk network by constructing missing sidewalks along Maple Ave between Main St and Broad St (approx. 700 linear feet)
 Engineering Strategy #2: Improve or stripe new crosswalks along Main St between Maple St and Elm St. (5 blocks)

Q. Do we submit a budget with the School Travel Plan?

- A. No, but be sure to include estimated costs of recommended strategies in the Action Plan, Section 9.

Q. Twelve of the elementary and middle schools in our county are interested in starting a SRTS program, should we submit separate plans or one plan together with lots of different details for each school?

- A. In order to be eligible as part of an infrastructure grant application, a School Travel Plan must be specific to one school or multiple schools that adjacent to each other, where a single project would impact them all. This is especially important this year, as non-infrastructure grants have been put on hold for this round.

Also, school systems that are new to Safe Routes to School programs generally find it easier to start with a pilot school and to go from there. For more information, refer to the material available at www.virginiadot.org/saferoutes or contact the VDOT SRTS Coordinator.